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**Post conflict reconstruction efforts in tribal areas of  
Pakistan through informal education***By* Dawood MAMOON<sup>†</sup>

**Abstract.** The paper is a first effort of its kind to discuss the issue of post conflict reconstruction efforts in the tribal belt of Pakistan by focusing on soft skills and peaceful behavior of locals on account of informal means of delivering education. The paper explains why informal education in comparison to formal schooling is a preferred strategy to change the behaviors of locals towards subtle national integration in short time span. The paper presents the learning initiatives and possible outcomes with help of academic literature that focuses on post conflict reconstruction efforts in regions like Africa and Asia.

**Keywords.** Education, Informal education.


**JEL.** A11, A14, A20.


**1. Introduction: Framing the Argument for Informal Education  
in FATA**

E ducation has always been a matter of utmost precedence for the civilized societies. It is a critical determinant for the growth of human society and its economic progress. Societies who invest heavily on education realize its long lasting and extensive effects. Unfortunately Pakistan has always been deprived of quality education. The role of private sector is viable in this regard that is trying hard to fill the void potentially that springs from state's inability and incompetency to provide quality education to its masses. Everybody talks about the importance of education in the country in general and in tribal areas particularly to overcome the problems these areas are confronting with. But state has been failed to provide any university in the region. According to Article 37 of Constitution of 1973 it is the responsibility of state to remove illiteracy and provide compulsory and free education to all citizens of Pakistan. The data provided by government often does not reflect truly the ground realities. It is common practice that in settled areas of other provinces and even in capital territory the buildings of schools and government institutions are used for other businesses then how this is not practiced in the areas where already there is least interest for education. Education can play the best role in mitigating the conflicts in tribal areas of Pakistan.

FATA is the periphery of Pakistan that is notorious to have been host to the Talibanisation movement. After army's Zarb-e-Azab action, terrorist networks are broken there. But it is time to reconstruct the area to consolidate the local population that has witnessed a wave of extremism for decades. One important step is to bring them to mainstream. Economic, political and social infrastructure needs to be built. The informal economic landscape is to be changed to formal one. This means people should be encouraged to undertake formal business activities. Banks should be opened as the first step so that local population has opportunities to have

<sup>†</sup> School of Business & Economics, University of Islamabad, Islamabad, Pakistan.

 . +0092 51 5730280 ext 258

 . dawoodmamoona96@gmail.com

credit for investment opportunities. As post conflict reconstruction steps, civil law enforcement authorities should make a visible presence to control law and order situation.

But most importantly, the local population needs counseling on peace and security. One step for this social emancipation is to open up formal schooling system with a carefully introduced syllabus that not only make them feel patriotic to be part of Pakistan but also teaching them human ethics and essence of peaceful behavior in the society. These schools would most probably cater to children and young adults. There is also a valid question as to the extent local population would willingly participate in academic activities and attend formal educational facilities. After decades of witnessing active conflict, one should expect a strong feeling of skepticism by local population with any quasi secular academic opportunities they would be provided with. Secondly networks of interest groups who benefit from informal setup of FATA would definitely present strong opposition. It is difficult psychologically to accept new ideas and people don't leave their comfort zones easily that had become their life style for decades.

Secondly, we are talking about changing the mind set of the whole population. It's the adults who decide whether their children should go to education institutions or not. So these adults need awareness and in most cases targeted convincing regarding the inclusion of theirs and their children into the formal and mainstream process of development. This kind of awareness activity cannot be achieved by only providing formal educational infrastructure with right quality and quantity. In post conflict reconstruction, the concept of informal education turns out to be a very successful strategy. It has been practiced with great success in many African countries that had earlier witnessed conflict.

Informal education targets its audience with a need based approach. It also is known to have been successful in delivering awareness to small groups. Population is seen to be more receptive and welcoming to informal ways of delivering educational contents. It is also accessible to populations irrespective of their age groups. Informal educational plans also click well with the intricacies of the local culture at micro level. It is also cheaper. For informal education no expensive infrastructure for education is required as it is in case of formal education. Informal education system also promotes volunteerism and is far more efficient and smoothly executed than a formal educational activity. In short government should facilitate a massive informal education plan for FATA. Volunteers or paid consultants should plan out these informal educational activities at village level. Mosques that are present in every locality should work as facilitation places. No expensive infrastructure is required and could be planned and executed in shorter time lines. The informal teaching is participatory and engages with local anthropology so the recipients would be more responsive to the contents of the activity.

Cultural, customary and social practices had kept tribal areas in a highly susceptible position. Tribal traditions not only confine the children from accessing the education but also withdraw them from their constitutional and basic human rights to education. Devastation of infrastructure and internal displacement of millions of people because of government operations against militancy had strapped down education from their primacy. State has also witnessed a stiff resistance by militants for education. They have been targeting the schools, colleges and other educational institutions. Most of them have been destroyed or closed due to security threats. Inadequate formal systems are finding it hard to provide the education to the individuals and society efficiently and effectively. In this regard informal learning can offer more and better education at all levels, to a growing number of people, particularly tribal areas of Pakistan where it needs a long way to go. The scant success of current formal education systems to meet the prevailing demands, has shown to a growing number of researchers the urgent need to provide alternatives that escape from the formal standards, in order to solve these problems. The inadequacy and the incapacity of formal educational models to

meet the needs of individuals and of society at large must lead to the search for alternatives that escape that mold. The legitimacy of schools is based upon their role as credentialing agencies while informal learning will derive its legitimacy only from its ability to meet real social needs. The rigid structure of formal schools, mainly based on laws and regulations than on the real needs of students, offering a curriculum that leans away from individuals and from society, far more concerned with performing programmes than with reaching useful objectives, obeying a rigid set of clerical-administrative procedures, has long since fallen short of meeting individual and social needs. In order to meet the demands of education, informal learning can play an important role. The term 'informal learning' has been utilized progressively as a part of grown-up training for a few reasons. It gives a basic difference to formal learning or preparing that recommends more noteworthy opportunity for learners. It perceives the social significance of gaining from other individuals, however infers more prominent extension for individual office than socialization. It attracts regard for the discovering that happens in the spaces encompassing exercises and occasions with a more obvious formal reason, and happens in a much more extensive assortment of settings than formal instruction or preparing. It can likewise be considered as a correlative accomplice to gaining for a fact, which is generally understood more as far as individual than interpersonal learning.

Civil society and NGOs can make a difference under the state's vigilance. Informal learning, starting from the basic needs of students, is concerned with the establishment of strategies that are compatible with reality. In this case learning occurs independently, outside the curricula of educational institutions and it does not demand prerequisites in terms of previous schooling. Students can be taught according to their interests and competencies. Students can acquire knowledge through work activity that regularly gives rise to learning. Participation in group activities includes team working towards a common outcome and groups set up for special purposes. Working with others allow students to observe and listen to others and to participate in activities and hence to learn some new practices and new perspectives to gain different kinds of knowledge and expertise. Working in pairs boosts motivation and confidence and if well-supported and successful; helps to tackle challenging tasks. Learning through different interaction patterns will help children to give respect to others point of view, creating harmony and tolerance within the group hence in society. Thus working for the betterment of the society in collaboration with other stakeholders. Keeping the socio-economic conditions of such areas in mind; some monetary benefits can be offered to the parents if they send their children to school regularly. In this way dropout rate of schools can be minimized and controlled. Skilled based learning is also a good and rapid way to change the standard of living of the people. This type of learning can directly help people to earn and improve their livelihood. Better standard of living will help them to focus on their children's better and bright future.

## **2. Motivations from literature**

The priority areas towards conflict mitigation have generally been related to macro reforms. Social programming did not receive as much attention in post conflict areas as security, political and economic sector reforms. Yet the potential for peace to be sustained in the longer term may be heavily dependent on education as a key factor to address social or cultural tensions (Smith & Vaux, 2003; Wedge, 2008). As suggested in previous section mosques may provide a good place for delivering informal education to all age groups. Such need arises especially because of remoteness of the locations where civic networks are absent as well as formal schooling facilities. There is a precedence of utilizing local institutions of conflict transformation by institutionalizing them with amendments that are suitable to modern laws. Such has been commonly practiced as a broader agenda for reconciliation process in Africa (Ndangiza, 2007). As part of the reconciliation process, the first step is to apply decentralization and devolution of power to local

authorities and communities because too much power in the center is detrimental to the tribal peripheries according to the dependency theory (Kauzya, 2007).

There is a huge literature that talks about faith based schooling systems and has been prevalent since many centuries. These faith based schools exist in developed as well as developing countries. Most of such schools impart modern education curricula to its students in addition to religious education (De Ruyter, 2001). However mosques in tribal belts of Pakistan are primarily the places of worship and only, if any, religious education is imparted. The need based approach to imparting formal education may only work if these places of worships are utilized in a manner that some part of modern education curricula is taught to the locals through informal means. The ones who participate in delivering such informal education to the tribal population are more of mediators than teachers. The personal integrity that is the characteristics of the tribal culture should be promoted and channeled towards positive behavior.

The modern curricula may contain civic and citizenship education to start with. The curricula should be inquiry based to help the students investigate what it means to be a citizen in terms of common rights and responsibilities rather than identity factors such as ethnicity, religion or culture (Alexander *et al.*, 2010; Ben-Porath, 2006). The pedagogies should promote active learning through community based projects (Green *et al.*, 2006). For example, in post conflict Northern Ireland where children grow up in communities that define themselves as either British or Irish, the citizenship curriculum focuses on equality and humanrights (Connolly *et al.*, 2002).

The primary skills imparted to the locals may include the development of generic skills such as communication skills, the ability to draw on multiple sources of information and evaluate conflicting evidence. For example the teaching of history is an important concern in relation to conflict (Cole, 2007). Single narrative histories may be switched to multiple perspective narratives. There is a strong role of the government to facilitate such initiatives that can enable the national and international stakeholders to go to tribal belts of Pakistan and start intensive informal education activities as part of the post conflict reconstruction efforts. The intellectual stimuli for the contents of these informal activities can come from various fields like intercultural, feminist and historical/political education; community work and trauma work. All these fields have developed concepts of constructive conflict management. Such skills should be imparted to the locals that can develop certain personality traits in them. These may include:

- a) Self Esteem
- b) Tolerance of frustration and ambiguity
- c) Self awareness, awareness of others and empathy
- d) Communication and interaction skills
- e) Awareness of personal and cultural attitudes to conflict behavior in conflict situations
- f) Ability to analyse and evaluate conflicts
- g) Practical skills to manage and overcome conflict

These traits if imparted to the local irrespective of their age groups would become a great source of self reflection to own and prevailing attitudes towards conflict. The potential to change behaviors towards more peaceful reactions should be experienced in real form (Maringer & Steinweg, 1997). The learning outcomes should be based on non-violent and voluntary learning, resource orientation, gender specific learning and fostering attitudes. If ample resources are provided for these informal educational activities, such activities may comprise of following:

- a) biographical work
- b) discussions with witnesses
- c) drama, psychodrama and pantomime
- d) problem solving and group work
- e) creative art work
- f) media work

In making such informal educational activities accessible to the whole tribal belt of Pakistan inter-institutional cooperation with the civil society in urban areas is paramount. This should mean developing links with health organisations, psychological services and the mosques –that host the informal education activities. Key figures in the local communities should also be engaged in order to make the outreach of the informal programs more effective (Fischer & Tumler, 2000).

The informal educational programs should be delivered in both national and local languages. This means that the teachers should be able to effectively communicate in both national language Urdu and local language Pushto. This will facilitate cultural exchange and national cohesion within tribal areas.

It is also quite important that the educators should set aside their own preconceptions regarding the political and social anthropology of the tribal areas by promoting ideas from younger participants among the groups and then balancing it with the cultural and social experiences of the senior members that have evolved through the local family values (Bauch, 1999; Rudolph, 1999; Paisajoven & GTZ, 1999). Young people from non-Western conflict regions often have more exposure towards the culture of modern world. Thus educated urban youth should be encouraged to volunteer for missionary visits to the tribal areas where they can influence the local youth towards more modern and mainstream ways of life style.

The conflict in tribal lands that are distant from the center of mainstream economic, political and cultural activities are usually ignited by exploiting the power of youth at these locations because generally their world view of modern society and its values are informed and motivated not by social cohesion, the community and social capital but by so called and self-perceived economic and political exploitation – may it be true (Africa Dialogue, 2012). So informal education exercises by NGOs, urban educational institutions or international development organisations by targeting these disenfranchised youth has high probability of success in favor of peace (Bronkhorst, 2011).

There is a strong possibility that the mediators through informal education may influence the traditional councils and administration setups in the tribal areas like jarga, that work on the philosophy of crude deterrence, towards more informed and unbiased and gender sensitized decisions. There is a strong role of traditional tribal leaders in supporting outside informal post conflict initiatives. The role of native administration has been especially utilized to the benefit of locals in peace and pacification of conflict afflicted tribal lands in Africa and Asia (Elhussein, 1989).

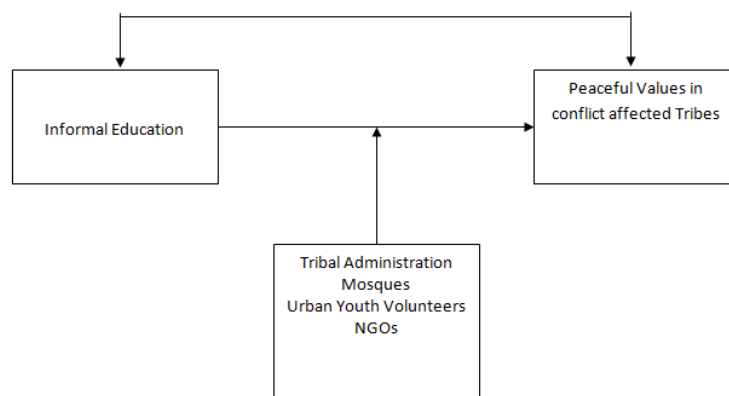


Figure 1. *Soft Intervention in Post Conflict FATA*

### 3. Concluding guidelines for peace education in tribal areas

Due to the proximity of FATA to Afghanistan, it has been exposed to conflict since last many centuries. However, the recent dynamics of conflict are more of an outcome of a prolonged war on terrorism that the US is waging in Afghanistan.

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The recent initiatives by Pakistan army in order to bring peace to this conflict zone by waging Zarb-e-Azb against the Taliban factions are met with much success. The Taliban have been pushed towards Afghanistan and their sanctuaries in FATA are demolished. However with decades of active conflict, the tribal areas of Pakistan have not seen any integration to mainland Pakistan. Currently infrastructure is being built with the help of Pakistan army and efforts to bring locals into mainstream are being worked upon. This paper is an effort to supplement these post conflict reconstruction efforts by suggesting that informal means of education are utilized in order to efficiently enable wider access to local population to win over the minds in favor of national integration. The formal means of education asks both time and money and would not be available to the locals in an immediate timeframe. The paper suggests that informal means of education is also quite responsive to the cultural intricacies of the locals and would exploit the local anthropology towards the benefit of presenting with the dividends of peace to the locals. The paper asks for volunteerism on behalf of urban youth to come and give education to locals of all age groups in FATA. The Mosques that are present in every small town and village may be the place where these informal education activities can take place. The paper also asks for the local tribal administration to be taken on board for such initiatives.



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